

Message Text

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SUBJECT: POSTPONEMENT OF GREEK-TURKISH TALKS ON AEGEAN CONTINENTAL
SHELF DISPUTE-ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND

REF: ATHENS 7316

1. EMBOFF HAD A LENGTHLY DISCUSSION SEPTEMBER 24 WITH DIMITRI MACRIS, MFA DIRECTOR FOR TURKISH AFFAIRS, ON THE CURRENT OVERALL STATUS OF THE AEGEAN DISPUTE. MACRIS POINTED OUT THAT TURKISH POSITIONS HAVE BEEN HARDENING BOTH AS TO THE FIR CONTROVERSY (SEE SEPTTEL) AND AS TO THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE. WHILE MANY OF THE POINTS HE MADE HAVE ALREADY BEEN REPORTED IN REFTTEL, HE PROVIDED SOME ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND AND ATMOSPHERICS WHICH ARE OF INTEREST.

2. MACRIS STATED THAT FOLLOWING GOT ACCEPTANCE OF PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS' JANUARY 1975 PROPOSAL THAT THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE BE REFERRED TO THE ICJ, IT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY AGREED THAT DURING THE MID-MAY MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTER TBITSIOS AND CAGLAYANGIL IN ROME EXPERTS FROM BOTH SIDES WOULD BEGIN TO DRAFT THE TEXT OF A COMPROMIS WHICH WOULD IDENTIFY THOSE SPECIFIC ISSUES WHICH THE TWO GOVERNMENTS WOULD SUBMIT TO THE COURT FOR
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ITS CONSIDERATION. HOWEVER, MACRIS SAID, AT ROME THE

TURKISH EXPERTS REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE IN THAT EXERCISE
"TO THE ASTONISHMENT EVER OF FOREIGN MINISTER CAGLAYANGIL".

3. TO SALVAGE SOMETHING FROM THAT MEETING, THE GREEK SIDE PREPARED AND PRESENTED TO THE TURKS ITS OWN DRAFT COMPROMIS. MACRIS THEN ASSERTED THAT AFTER THE LATE MAY MEETING IN BRUSSELS BETWEEN PRIME MINISTERS CARAMANLIS AND DEMIREL--AT WHICH IT WAS SPECIFICALLY AGREED THAT THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE WOULD BE REFERRED TO THE ICJ--THE GREEK MFA AT VARIOUS LEVELS CONTINUALLY PRESSED THE TURKISH SIDE TO AGREE TO A PLACE AND DATE FOR A MEETING AT WHICH THE COMPROMISE COULD BE FINALIZED. THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD, MACRIS STATED, THE TURKS KEPT STALLING AND REFUSED TO COMMIT THEMSELVES.

4.FINALLY, ON SEPTEMBER 13, THE TURKISH MFA TOLD THE GREEK SIDE THAT IT WOULD BE WILLING TO MEET IN PARIS ON SEPTEMBER 25-26. WHEN THE GREEKS DRAFTED A PROPOSED PRESS RELEASE WHICH STIPULATED THAT THE MEETING'S PURPOSE WAS TO MOVE THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE ALONG TOWARD ICJ CONSIDERATION, THE TURKS DEMURRED AND SAID THAT THEY ENVISAGED THE MEETING AS ONE WHICH WOULD DISCUSS "PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE AEGEAN AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS". FOR THE NEXT WEEK OR SO SEVERAL MESAGES WERE EXCHANGED IN AN ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE. THE GREEK SIDE AT ONE POINT SUGGESTED THAT NO ADVANCE PRESS RELEASE BE ISSUED, AND THAT BOTH SIDES MEET WITHOUT PUBLICITY AND ONLY MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT AFTER THEY HAD DONE SO.

5. THE TURKS REMAINED ADAMANT, HOWEVER, AND INSISTED THAT WITH OR WITHOUT AN ADVANCE PRESS RELEASE THE MEETING MUST BE BROADER IN SCOPE THAN JUST THE FORMULATION OF THE COMPROMISE.FINALLY, WHEN THE GREEKS ARGUED THAT AGREEMENT HAD ALREADY BEEN REACHED IN BRUSSELS BY THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS THAT THE CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE WOULD BE HANDLED SEPARATELY AND SUBMITTED TO THE ICJ FOR RESOLUTION, THE TURKS RESPONDED THAT "PERHAPS THERE WAS A CONFIDENTIAL

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MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTERS ON THIS POINT". MACRIS ADDED THAT THIS FINAL ASSERTION OF THE TURKISH SIDE WAS "JUST TOO MUCH" AND THE GREEKS THEN DECIDED THAT NO MEETING COULD BE HELD.

6. MACRIS IS OF THE OPINION THAT THE TURKISH SIDE FELT CONSTRAINED TO ATTEMPT TO WIDEN THE SCOPE OF THE MEETING TO AVOID DOMESTIC POLITICAL CRITICISM,

ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE UPCOMING TURKISH SENATE ELECTIONS ON OCTOBER 12. MACRIS ALSO FEELS--AS HE HAS INDICATED MANY TIMES BEFORE--THAT THE TURKISH MILITARY LEADERSHIP IS IN FACT THE FINAL ARBITER ON THE AEGEAN ISSUE AND THAT IT HAS DECIDED THAT THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT PROCEED ON THIS PATH OF RESOLUTION OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE THROUGH THE ICJ.

7. MACRIS SEES THIS LATEST SETBACK AS A SERIOUS BLOW TO GREEK HOPES FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THIS PARTICULARLY THORNY ISSUE. HE HINTED AS WELL THAT IT COULD CONSTITUTE A POLITICAL PROBLEM FOR THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT AND THAT BECAUSE OF THIS THE GOG MUST "DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT". WHEN EMBOFF PRESSED HIM FOR AN INDICATION OF POSSIBLE ACTIONS THE GOG COULD TAKE IN THE FACE OF THE TURKISH STAND, HE ASSERTED THAT ALTERNATIVES WERE NOW BEING STUDIED BUT THAT "ONE POSSIBILITY MIGHT BE TO REFER THE MATTER TO THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL IN THE HOPES THAT IT WOULD DIRECT THAT THE ISSUE BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE ICJ."

8. THE GREEK MORNING PRESS SEPTEMBER 25 CARRIES REPORTS OF THE CANCELLATION OF THE PARIS MEETING IN TWO VARIANT FORMS. ACROPOLIS AND KATHIMERINI (BOTH GENERALLY PRO-GOVERNMENT) CITE REPORTS FROM ANKARA ACCORDING TO WHICH TURKEY HAD POSTPONED THE TALKS BECAUSE PARIS WAS NO LONGER AN "IMPARTIAL CAPITAL" SINCE, IN THE COURSE OF HIS RECENT VISIT TO GREECE, FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING HAD EXPRESSED HIMSELF IN FAVOR OF THE GREEK POSITION ON THAT ISSUE. (COMMENT: IN RESPONSE TO A JOURNALIST'S QUESTION DURING HIS SEPTEMBER 19 PRESS CONFERENCE, GISCARD ACKNOWLEDGED HE HAD DISCUSSED THE CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE WITH PRIME MINISTER

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CARAMANLIS AND STATED "YOU KNOW THAT GREECE, DESPITE THE FACT THAT ITS RIGHTS HAVE BEEN RECOGNIZED BY VERY OLD PRACTICE IN THE AEGEAN, HAS NEVERTHELESS AGREED TO HAVE THE WORLD COURT DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM" AND ADDED THAT THEREFORE "WE MUST WAIT FOR THE COURT'S DECISION.") HOWEVER, TO VIMA (LIBERAL, OPPOSITION) IN A FRONT PAGE LEAD STORY REJECTS THAT EXPLANATION FOR THE POSTPONEMENT OF THE TALKS AND ASSERTS THAT TURKEY "HAS BACKED AWAY FROM ITS PRIOR COMMITMENT" DUE TO THE FACT THAT GREECE WOULD NOT ACCEPT A WIDENING OF THE PARAMETERS OF THE MEETING WHICH IT HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY AGREED WAS TO DEAL ONLY WITH THE PREPARATION OF A COMPROMIS FOR THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE. KUBISCH

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